

**From the desk of:**  
**STEVE MANDL**  
**George Washington H.S.**  
**Varsity Baseball Coach**

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October 22, 2006

Dear Jim, Ron and Coaches;

Sorry I could not make it to the hearing and I sure hope this may serve as a testimony to my beliefs with what is being proposed.

Ironically, I just got in from a wood bat tournament in Philadelphia, which is a tune up for the National Wood Bat Championships later this week in Jupiter Fla. I have been coaching a team for the past few years where currently 7 of my George Washington HS players are a major part of.

I grew up playing with wood bats and I am an "old school guy" We didn't have the DH, nor all the other stuff that surrounds our game today. But let me tell you something, I detested the aluminum bat when I first came to GW 24 years ago, but after I got past all the stereotypes and prejudices that follow and linger around the "metal bat" I realized and still do that for HS programs aluminum bats are the best way to go for several reasons.

As I said my players love wood, and so do I, but as witnessed this week in our tournament, we saw 9, that's right, 9 bats broken during the 3 days, we would all go broke if we had to replace them day in and day out. We practice with wood because we know that someday if we are lucky, we will be playing pro ball, but that is a long way away.

Just to let you know though, I had 6 players drafted in the past 3 years and with the crop of student/athletes I have now I will have two more, at least, in the next 3 years, so I know what the future and present both hold for these kids.

When I had Manny Ramirez as a young phenom in high school, I feared every day that he would kill somebody with the ball coming off his bat, but surprisingly, and fortunately he never did. Unfortunately, while in the Major Leagues, he did hit Josias Manzanita with a line drive and caused him to have surgery on his testicles and that was with wood. The reason I had this fear was due to the bad rap that metal always had, and back then there was more reason to be concerned, bats were -5 whereas now they are -3 and are BESR regulated and tested, used on every level including college, up to the pro ball level.

I have had 4 players from my HS team play major league ball and have never in their careers in high school ever seen ANY injury involving balls hit off a bat. As a matter of fact we have had a few scares while practicing or playing with wood as bats have been shattered and bat heads flying across the field like a propeller.

If we were to go to wood bats we would firstly have to increase our miniscule budget to be able to furnish and equip our team, and then have to deal with teams that do not have coaches who teach their player how to hit with metal, now would have to learn how to hit with wood which is an art. We hold several National offensive records as it is, and find it hard for any team to compete with us, it would turn into a travesty, my league record is 314 wins with only 13 losses, we out hit everybody now, what would happen with wood? We would continue to hit while others would never score a run. I have had over 20 pitchers from my program go to proball, we would never give up a run. It wouldn't only change the game, it would stop it.

As I fortunately have had the great chance to coach all over the world in my career and to be in professional baseball, the biggest difference I find between the two bats is that a metal bat has a HUGE and wide "sweet spot" while a wood bat has that one small area where a ball will have its best "air flight" which just shows day after day that an average hitter can get more hits with metal than wood, but the ball will not come off the bat any quicker, just more frequently for poorer hitters. As a matter of fact I have been on record in saying that a sweet spot on a wood bat is more potent than a metal bat in the same spot.

Again, fortunately for all involved, I have never seen any injuries that resulted in balls hit off a metal bat. The only injuries I have seen in my 24 years are game related like twisted ankles, collisions and the like.

I was instrumental in starting "Take The Field" who built baseball fields around the 5 boroughs on NYC. We at GW were the pilot program. I began this endeavour because of the fear of injuries caused by the atrocious fields around the city; I never feared injuries caused by aluminum bats after my initial Manny Ramirez fear.

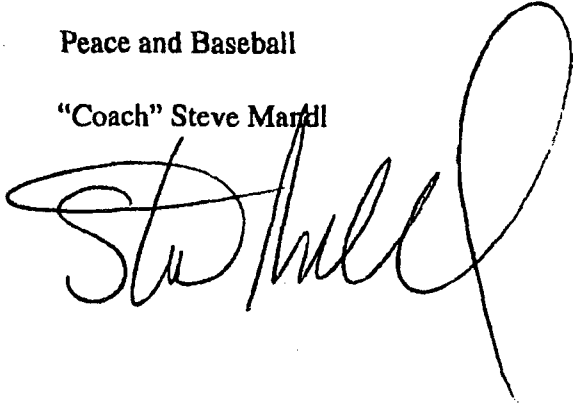
I keep hearing about these "studies" regarding aluminum bats and injuries, but as a coach, I don't see this as a fact. The student/athletes are bigger, stronger, and faster than they were several years ago, if the ball is being hit harder, it is because of the athletes and not the bats, and as the bats went to a -3, run production seems to be down.

While I was at the National HS Coaches convention, there was a demo and presentation on runs scored, hits, home runs etc. now and before metal bat. I really wasn't surprised at the similarity in all categories over the past 30 years, I have seen both ends of the spectrum and when you get past the "hype" you will see the game is the same and the kids are the kids, bigger stronger but still high school kids trying to make it to the big leagues, where then, they can use wood and finally decide who really is the best hitter. Wood will decide that, but until then, let the kids dream and keep our game within financial reaches. We will continue to practice occasionally with wood, where certain drills are best suited for wood, but I pray that we have a choice as to what we want and can use.

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I hope this all makes sense, and just to wrap up, I have seen no evidence that metal bats are a result in baseball coming off the bat harder or faster. Give coaches a choice as to what they want to use and wish me luck in Florida, my fundraising wasn't as strong this year so I wood bat practice was curtailed a bit, but hitters will hit.

Peace and Baseball

"Coach" Steve Mandl

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Mandl". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end.